

Timeline of Delaware Colony History

10,000 BCE



The Lenni-Lenape settle present-day Delaware and surrounding regions.



1609



Explorer Henry Hudson reaches Delaware Bay.



1681



Englishman William Penn takes control of the Lower Counties.



1765



The Stamp Act infuriates colonists.



1787

Delaware becomes the first state.





Original People

The Lenni-Lenape lived in today's Delaware long before European settlers arrived. They also lived in New Jersey and parts of Pennsylvania. These Native Americans organized into **clans** rather than into a large tribe or nation. All of the clans spoke related languages. Some historians believe up to 20,000 Lenni-Lenape may have lived in the Delaware River valley. That was a large population for a Native American group. The Lenni-Lenape were skilled farmers and hunters.



**Agriculture
was the Lenni-
Lenape's main
source of food.**

↑ Maize, squash, and beans are often called the Three Sisters.

Crops such as maize (corn), squash, beans, and sweet potatoes could be stored. This guaranteed a food supply for autumn and winter. Lenni-Lenape women tended the farms. They planted the seeds and harvested the crops. Girls helped their mothers and female relatives with farming and cooking. Women also maintained the wigwam. Wigwams were dome-shaped house. They were made of bark placed over a wooden frame.



Most wigwams were 15 to 20 feet (4.5 to 6 meters) wide.

Men hunted and fished. They taught the boys to do the same. Lenni-Lenape often built their wigwams along rivers or shorelines to take advantage of foods found there. They fished from canoes and from the shore. They used nets, hooks, and wooden traps. They also speared fish with harpoons made of deer antlers. Hunters sought birds such as geese and turkeys. Their bows were made from tree branches. The arrowheads were shaped from flint and quartz.

PENNSYLVANIA

0 20 miles
0 20 km

Philadelphia

Fort Nassau



Wilmington

Fort Christina

Fort Casimir

New Castle

Area enlarged

Original 13 Colonies

DELAWARE
(LENNA-LENAPE)

NEW JERSEY

Leipsic River

St. James River

Delaware Bay

MARYLAND

Milford

Mispillion River

DELAWARE

Lewes

Nanticoke River

Millville

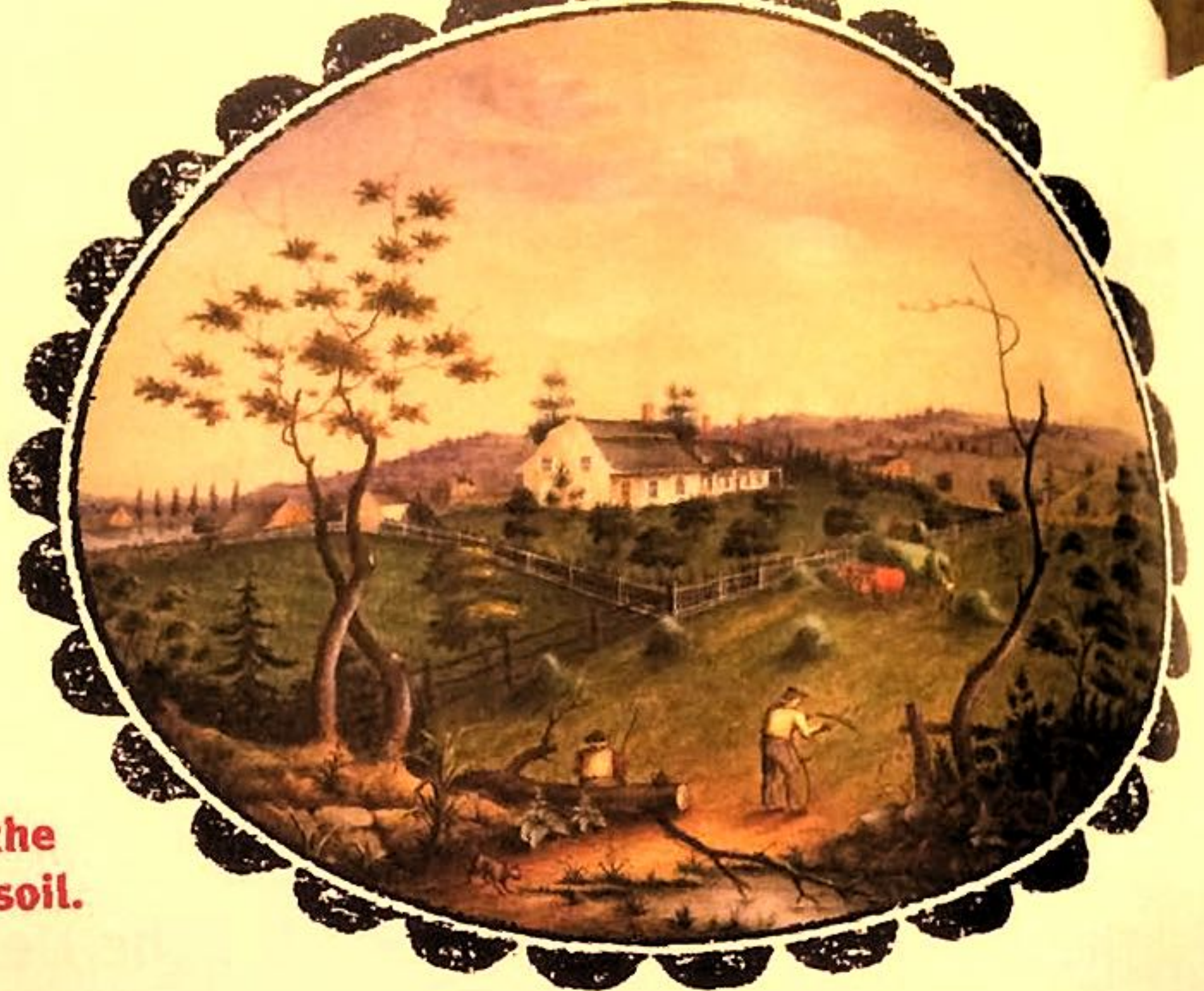
ATLANTIC

Colonial boundaries

Explorers and Settlers

The Lenni-Lenape still inhabited the Delaware region when European ships sailed along the coast in 1524. Explorer Henry Hudson's ship *Half Moon* reached present-day Delaware Bay in 1609. Hudson then sailed north to what is now New York Harbor and the Hudson River. Hudson told his Dutch employers about America's fertile farmland and fur-bearing animals. The Dutch decided to establish trade in the Americas.

The European settlers' farms benefited from the region's fertile soil.



The Pelt Trade

The Dutch West India Company was created in 1621 to control all the Dutch trade in the new **colony**.

The company named the lands Henry Hudson had claimed New Netherlands. The Dutch colonists built their first trading post by the Delaware River in 1626. They called it Fort Nassau. They traded with the Native Americans for beaver pelts (skins). These skins were used for warm clothing and hats. They brought high prices in Europe.

Zwaanendael Colony

Dutch settlers set up a second colony near the Delaware Bay in 1631. They named it Zwaandendael (ZWAHN-ehn-dayl). They brought Dutch goods such as iron pots and sturdy duffel cloth to continue their trading with Leni-Lape. The next year, a Native American chief stole a tin medallion from Zwaanendael to make a tobacco pipe. The colonists complained. The Leni-Lenape executed the chief because they did not want the settlers to stop trading. This made friends of the chief angry. They burned down the settlement and killed all the colonists.

The Dutch traded for furs with the Leni-Lenape and other native peoples.

Zwaanendael
means "valley
of the swans."



New Sweden

The next colony was built by the Swedes in 1638.

They called it New Sweden.

Part of the colony was a settlement named Fort Christina. It was on the Delaware River. The company

that owned New Sweden also wanted to profit from animal pelts. New Sweden

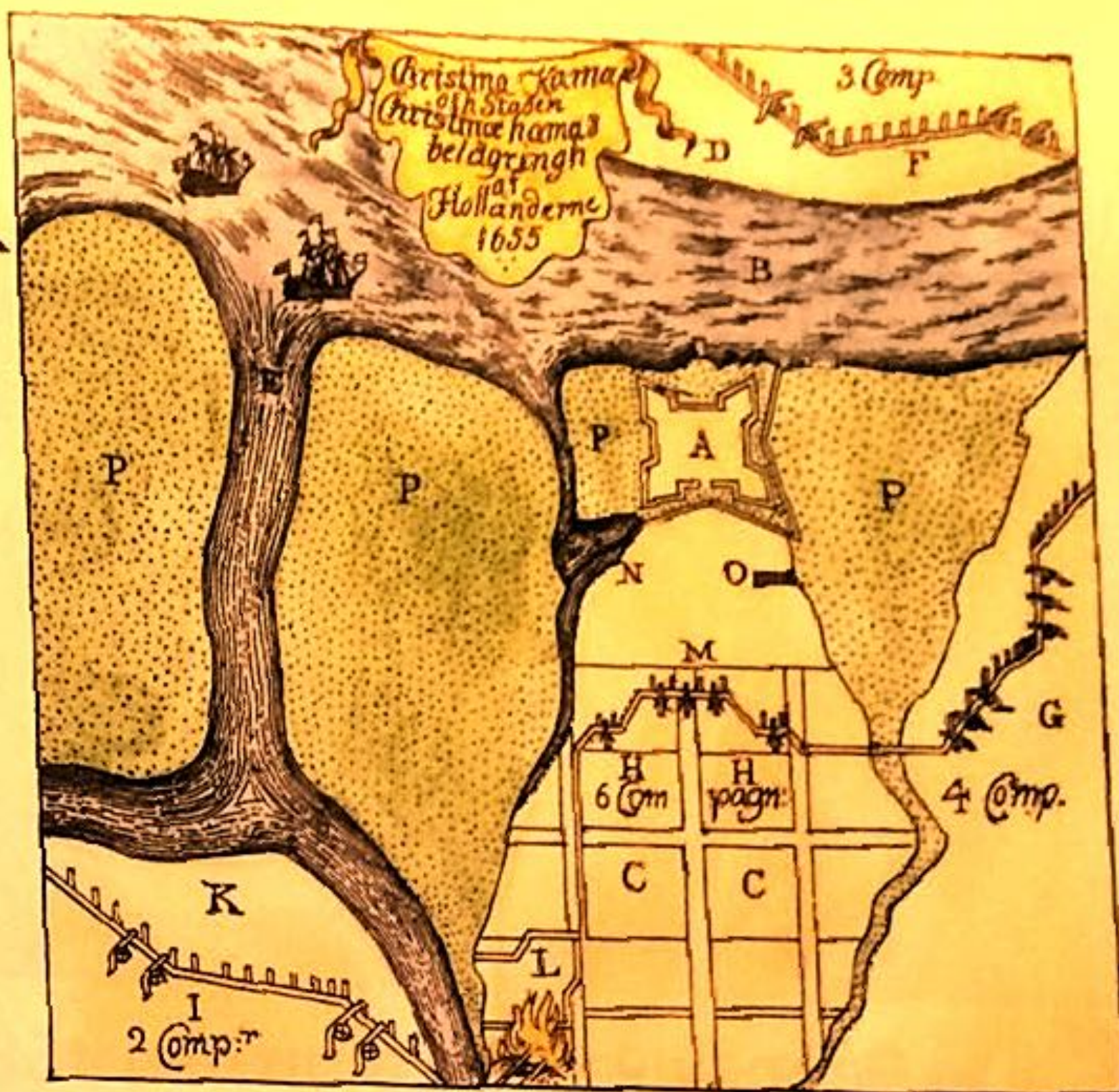
traded with native peoples for 2,200 beaver, otter, and bear pelts in its first year. Johan Printz became governor three years later. Printz introduced tobacco farming to the colony. He also maintained the fur trade.



Governor Printz was known for maintaining peaceful relations with the Native Americans and nearby British settlers.

Fort Christina
was named after
Queen Christina
of Sweden.

**Fort Christina's sturdy walls
failed to protect it from the
Dutch attackers.**



War Between the Dutch and the Swedes

Printz's final years saw trouble with the nearby Dutch. In 1655, New Netherland governor Peter Stuyvesant led 400 soldiers and retook a fort the Swedes had conquered the previous year. The Dutch then marched south and attacked New Sweden's Fort Christina. They destroyed the Swedish farms. The Swedes at the fort gave up after two weeks. New Sweden now belonged to New Netherland. Stuyvesant returned home a hero.

England Takes Control

Stuyvesant's triumph lasted less than 10 years.

England captured the settlements of what would become the Delaware Colony in the 1660s. A peace treaty in 1673 gave them the area permanently.

William Penn was the governor of Pennsylvania Colony. In 1681, England gave him the area along the Delaware River as well, so his colony would have a route to the ocean. Penn named the settled region the Lower Counties.

In 1696, William Penn wrote about a plan to unite the American colonies.



William Penn founded the Pennsylvania Colony in 1681.





William Penn encouraged a friendly relationship with the Lenni-Lenape.

The Lower Counties

The Lower Counties came into conflict with Pennsylvania's **Quaker** government as they grew. Quakers deeply believed in peace. Pennsylvania's Quaker leaders disapproved of spending money on forts or weapons. France and Spain went to war with England in 1689. French **privateers** were soon raiding settlements. The Quakers still refused to pay for defense. The Lower Counties disobeyed Quaker wishes by forming a **militia**.

After creating their own legislature, the people of Delaware still shared a governor with Pennsylvania.


Penn, hoping to keep the peace, allowed the people of Delaware to elect their own legislature.



The situation worsened when Pennsylvania's **legislature** considered sending help to defend New York against the French. The Lower Counties asked why New York deserved help and they did not. Penn was unable to calm the Lower Counties. He allowed them to elect their own legislature to pass laws. This decision was an important step toward Delaware becoming an independent colony.

Life in the Colony

Most settlers in the Lower Counties grew corn and wheat. A smaller number planted tobacco. The workday began before sunrise. Children spent part of the day doing chores such as milking cows or hauling spring water to the house. Farmers used wooden plows edged with iron to till the soil. Wheat was harvested by hand with bladed tools. Colonists held cornhusking parties in late autumn to shuck corn for the winter.



A red ear of corn was a symbol of good luck.

Women at Work

Women raised children and kept house. They also made the family's clothes and prepared meals. Wives and daughters of sheep farmers spun the fleece into wool. Some families grew flax. They spun its fiber into linen. Extra yarn or cloth was sold in nearby towns. Farm meals might include ham or salted pork from slaughtered hogs. Bread was made of wheat or corn. A fireplace provided the cooking fire.

Fireplaces provided farm families light at night and warmth in the winter.



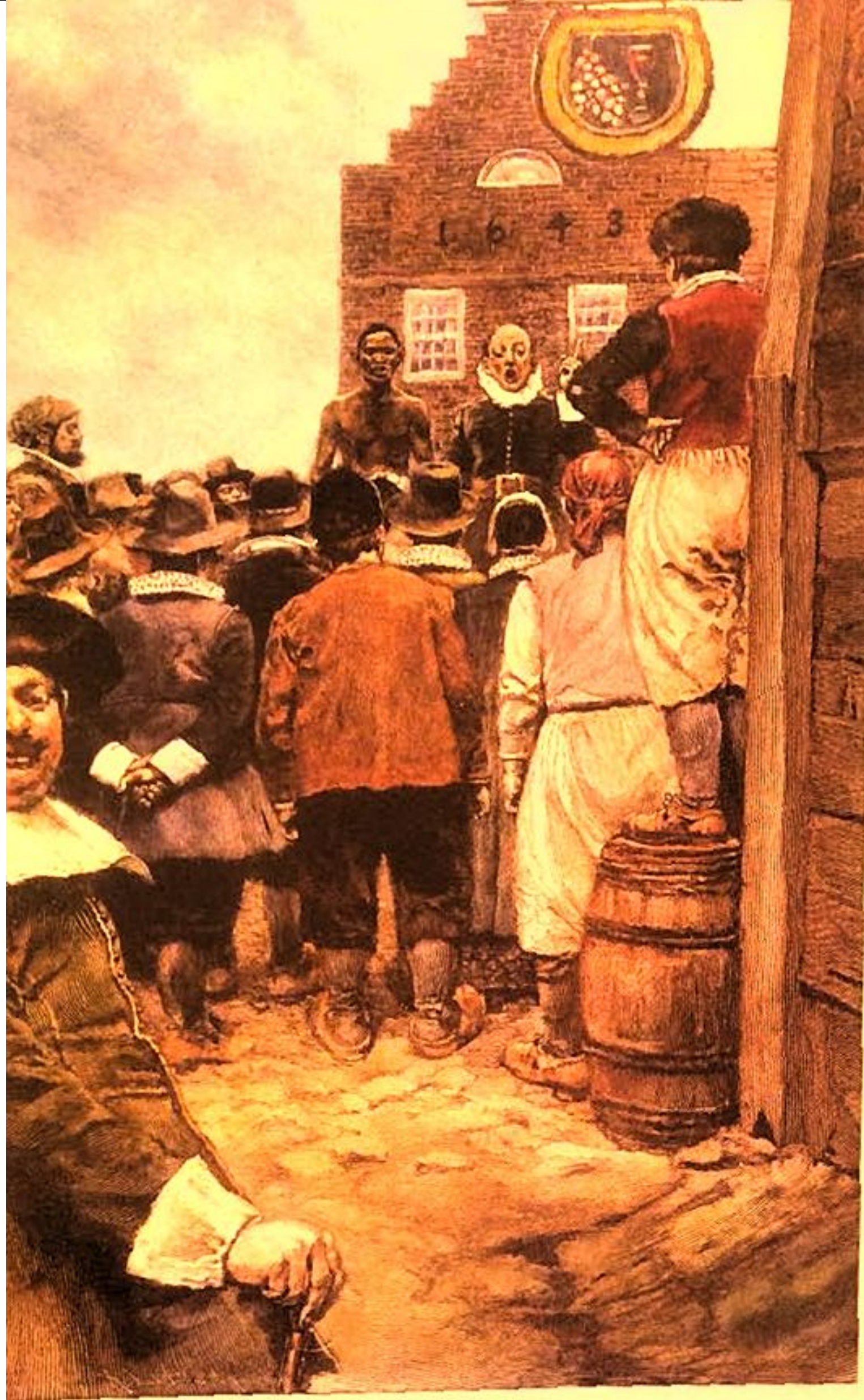
Most Quaker schools had only one room.



Quaker children were encouraged to learn reading and writing to help them study the Bible.

The Colony Grows

New settlers were streaming into the Lower Counties by the early 1700s. Quakers set up many farms. They wore simple clothes and worked hard. They also filled their homes with very plain furniture. They valued education. Children studied reading and writing. Quakers also strongly believed in community service. Children and adults all spent part of their time helping others.



Slaves were bought and sold at auctions.

slaves had been kidnapped in Africa. They worked in fields or workshops. About 1,500 enslaved people lived in the Lower Counties in 1750.

Scotch-Irish immigrants fled poor conditions and prejudice in England for a life in the colonies. Many came as **indentured servants**. An indentured servant worked several years in return for an employer paying his or her way across the Atlantic. Some farmers and tradesmen purchased slaves. These



Settlements such as New Castle had grown into bustling towns.

The town of New Castle was Delaware's capital until 1777.

The Lower Counties' population had grown to 35,000 by 1760. This was up from just 3,000 in 1700. But war was brewing on the western **frontier**. Britain had been battling with France and its Native American allies for control of North America. The French and Indian War began in 1754. This war would lead to decisions that split the British from their American cousins for good.